

William Hooper, First Chatham Clerk of Court

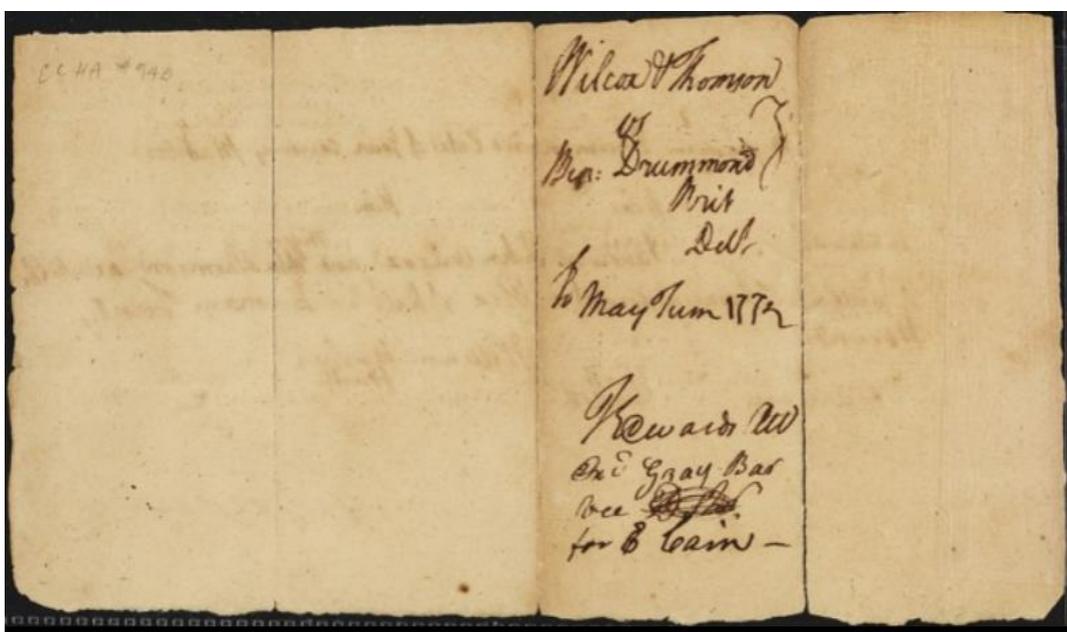
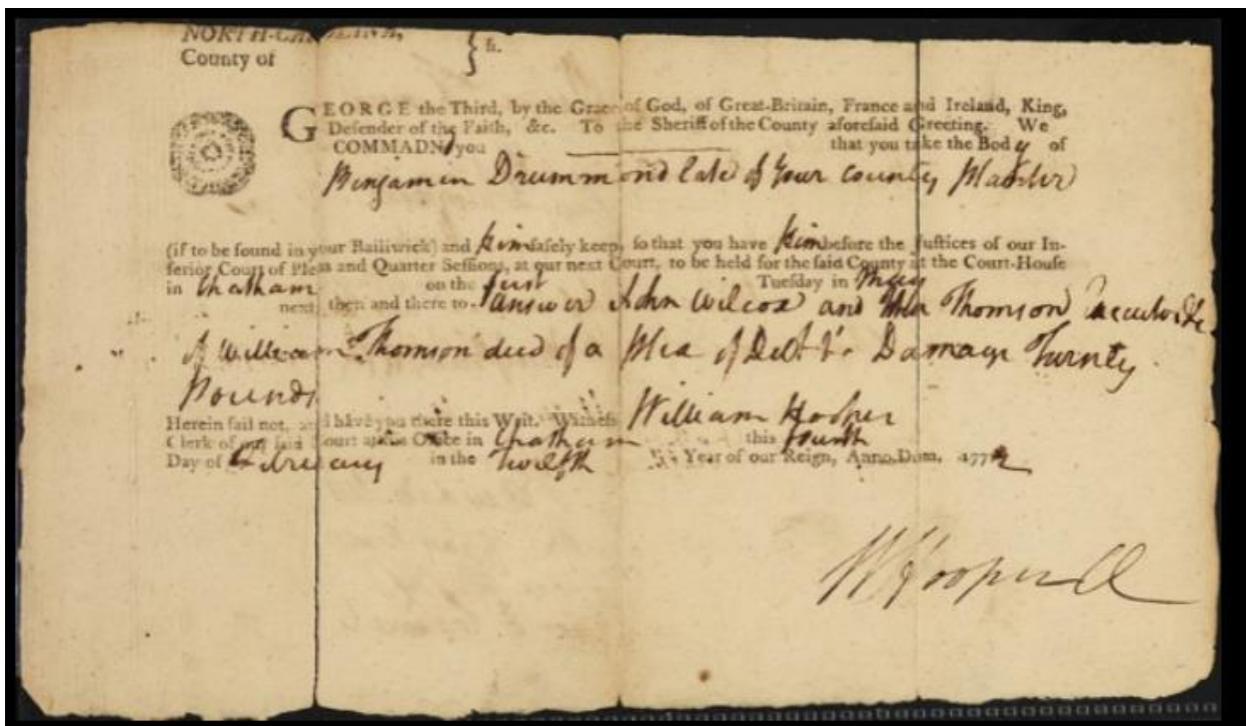
William Hooper is best remembered as one of three North Carolina signers of the Declaration of Independence, and he played a part in North Carolina events leading up to the Revolution.

Hooper's connection to Chatham County is as its first Clerk of Court. He never lived in Chatham, but as Clerk of Court from May of 1771 until November of 1772, he executed numerous legal documents on which his now-famous signature appears. Over the years, several such documents were donated to the Chatham County Historical Association.

In March 2022, we learned that those documents should have been transferred from the county to the State Archives. The state archives division is responsible for the permanent preservation of records of all current and defunct counties, state agencies, and government offices in the state. Records documenting historical court activities, including colonial-era civil and criminal actions and court documents, are maintained in local custody until they are legally transferred to the State Archives for permanent retention. When records are not transferred according to this requirement, the state archives division is responsible for taking action to retrieve them.

We contacted the State Archives to let them know about the documents in our possession, three court summonses, signed by Hooper, and they immediately sent someone to collect them. At the State Archives, the documents will be curated and properly preserved. The Chatham County Historical Association is still in possession of digital copies of the papers, which were created at our request by our partner, the NC Digital Heritage Center, and can be viewed on their website. Descriptions of the summonses and links to high resolution digital copies are below.

A court summons addressed most likely to the Sheriff of Martin County from Chatham County Clerk of Court William Hooper to bring Benjamin Drummond to the Chatham County Court on the first Tuesday in May. See high resolution images here: <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/239066#>



A court summons addressed to the Sheriff of the County of Chatham from Chatham County Clerk of Court William Hooper asking them to ensure that William Copeland is brought to the courthouse on the first Tuesday in February.

See high resolution images here: <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/239067#>

NORTH-CAROLINA,
Chatham County.

 GEORGE the Third, by the Grace of God of Great-Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. To the Sheriff of Chatham County, Greeting. WE command you that you take the Body of William Copeland, late of your County, Laborer (if to be found in your Balliwick) and ~~you~~ safely keep, so that you have him before the Justices of our Interior Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, to be held for the County aforesaid, at the Court-house therein on the first Tuesday in February next; then and there to answer ~~him~~ William Norton of a Plea of Trespas on the Case, to the Damage of the said ~~William Norton~~ ~~William Norton~~ Pounds Proclamation Money, &c. Herein fail not, and have you this Writ Witness William Hooper Clerk of our said Court at Office, this ~~10th~~ 10th Day of November Anno Domini, 1778 the XIIth Year of our Royal Majesty King George the Third.

B. Ridley Att. pro Libert. *Wm Hooper*

Norton 10 -
by a Writ
Copeland Junr.
J. A. 12.
To
Feb. Term
1778
Geo. Jesse Hender
per Claimant
Ridley Att.

A court summons addressed to the Sheriff of the County of Chatham from Chatham County Clerk of Court William Hooper. The document asks the sheriff to ensure that John Simmons and John Brown are present at the courthouse on the first Tuesday of November to pay Aequilla Covenar.

See high resolution images here: <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/239065#>

NORTH CAROLINA,
County of *Chatham*

 GEORGE the Third, by the Grace of God, of Great-Britain, France and Ireland, King, De-
fender of the Faith, &c.

To the Sheriff of the County of *Chatham* _____ Greeting:

WE COMMAND YOU, That of the Goods and Chattels; Lands and Tenements of *John Simmons*
and *John Brown* in your Bailiwick _____
you cause to be made the Sum of *Twenty pounds of good money* _____
which lately, before the Judges of our inferior Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, held for the County aforesaid,
at *Chatham* - *Aequilla Covenar* _____ recovered against
the said Simmons & Brown for Debt _____

and also the further Sum of *Three pounds one Shilling and Eight pence* _____
like Money, which were awarded to the said *Aequilla Covenar* _____
for *Wages* - Costs and Expences by *him* in and about *his* - Suit, in that behalf; whereof the
said *John Simmons & John Brown* is convicted, as appears to us of Record;
and have you the said Money, before our said Court, at *Chatham* _____ on the first
Tuesday in *November* next, to render to the said *Aequilla Covenar* _____
his Debt, Damages and Costs aforesaid. Herein fail not, and see you then and there this Writ. Witness
William Hooper this *fourth* _____ Day of *August* in the *twelfth*
Chatham _____ Year of our Prince, Anne D.omi 1772 _____

Wm Hooper & Co

Covenar
by
Simmons &
Brown
vs
Jifa
To Novem Court
1772

Debt 220
Wk 400 93 1-8
98 1-4
Items - 16-8
to Nov Court 13-4
Colling - - 8
225-1 1/4

No good found
E. Crin. Sh

Read more about William Hooper at <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/hooper-william>